

Dear Parents/Carers

**Re: Return to school full-time in September**

It is a pleasure to be writing to you about the start of the new school year. We are delighted that schools can fully re-open and are greatly looking forward to having students back in school. While there are challenges ahead for all schools, at Vandyke there are exciting times ahead and great learning opportunities for students.

Our major building programme is now complete with just minor works to be finished in the coming few days and that will not affect students or staff. Our contractor, Morgan Sindall, have been a terrific partner and have done an amazing job in getting the works ready for the start of term given the difficulties posed by the health emergency and the lockdown. The new science labs, extended café and social space, and Sixth Form Centre will provide fantastic facilities for students and staff, the new netball centre will be a wonderful addition to the town's community sports facilities as well as for our students and I must admit that it is good to see the back of the old maths huts, now demolished and gone forever, replaced by ten superb new maths classrooms. My only regret is that we cannot invite you to visit the new facilities just yet due to the Coronavirus but I hope that that opportunity will not be too far away.

You will be aware from Government announcements and from my previous correspondence with you that schools have been asked to open to all students in September. We have spent a lot of time carefully planning for this to happen and I am therefore writing to you again now to explain in greater detail what will be happening from next week and outlining our expectations of students. In the Government guidance to schools they have detailed a list of actions that must be taken and our risk assessment and planning have put into place a number of control measures that take these into account.

**1. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus symptoms or who have someone in their household who does, do not come into school**

We are therefore asking you not to send your children into school if they have the characteristic symptoms of a raised temperature and/or a persistent cough and/or loss of smell/taste. If any student develops these symptoms at school they will be immediately isolated and we will contact you so that they can home, advised to follow the stay at home guidance and you will be asked to arrange for them to have a test. Tests can be booked on line through NHS Test and Trace at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/>. If this test result is negative then they can return to school once well enough to do so. If the test result is positive you will need to let the school know and Public Health England will be in contact with us to decide on any further actions. The school will follow the advice of the public health experts.

**2. Clean hands thoroughly more often than usual**

Coronavirus is an easy virus to kill but requires the use of soap and running water or hand sanitiser. We expect students to be cleaning their hands regularly, including when they arrive at school, when they move between rooms or areas and before and after eating. We will ensure that there is hot water and sufficient soap in all our toilets and that each room has hand sanitiser available for students and staff to use on arrival for each lesson. We would also encourage students to bring their own hand sanitiser to school and to use it frequently.

**3. Ensure good respiratory hygiene**

Students and staff will be expected to use the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach and to ensure all used tissues are disposed of appropriately in the bins. While guidance continues to evolve, currently Public Health England does not

recommend the use of face coverings in schools as staff and students will be mixing in consistent groups and we have one-way routes along corridors. The policy at Vandyke will remain that any student or staff member who wishes to wear a face covering may do so but it is not mandatory. Please ensure that if your child wishes to do so, the mask or covering must be clean, of a plain design suitable for school and without any words or slogans and they must bring a clear, sealable plastic bag in which to keep the mask or covering when not in use. Please note that it is not advised to wear a face covering in classrooms as this inhibits learning. If a student has an underlying medical condition requiring a face covering to be worn throughout the day including lessons, please contact school so that we are aware of this. We do have some clinically vulnerable staff who work very closely with students and may themselves decide to use some form of face covering.

**4. Introduce enhanced cleaning**

As part of our risk assessment we have identified additional cleaning that will take place during the school day to ensure that frequently touched surfaces and the toilets, in particular, are more regularly cleaned than usual. Each year group has been allocated a set of toilets to use located in their zone.

**5. Minimise contact between individuals and maintain social distancing wherever possible**

It is recognised in the guidance that in the context of secondary education this is difficult to achieve while maintaining specialist teaching. It is therefore recommended that the use of year group zones is the best solution especially for students of an upper school age. Consequently each year group has its own zone and most lessons will take place in the zone. Exceptions are Catering/Food Technology, some Photography and Design Technology lessons and PE which will take place outdoors where risk of transmission is greatly reduced. We have generous changing room facilities and so can ensure that changing is arranged in a way that minimises time spent in the changing rooms. On the few occasions in the week when students from a year group use a particular set of changing rooms used immediately before by students from a different year group, arrangements are in place for additional cleaning to take place. While some schools are allowing students to arrive in PE kit on days when they have a PE lesson, we do not think that this is appropriate at Vandyke as it would mean students spending the whole day in classrooms wearing PE kit and footwear that may be wet or muddy. Uniform expectations are unchanged – all students are expected to wear their Vandyke school uniform every day and to bring their PE kit only on days when they have a timetabled PE lesson.

Each year group also has its own separate outdoor zone for break times and a different indoor zone for wet break times so that there be no mixing between students in different year groups. Due to limited space there can be no ball games at break times.

Each block has a one-way system which will improve movement along corridors and reduce face-to-face contact.

Students will arrive and depart the school site on a staggered basis to avoid large numbers of students congregating together:

	Arrive	Depart
Year 9	8.35 - 8.45am	2.45pm
Year 10	8.35 - 8.45am	2.55pm
Year 11	8.55 - 9.05am	3.05pm
Years 12/13	8.55 - 9.05am	3.05pm

As always, good punctuality is important and in the current circumstances lateness to school will cause significant difficulties so please do everything possible to ensure timely arrival in the morning. Students arriving before their assigned arrival time will be supervised separately.

Students in Years 12 and 13 will be in school for the full day using the new study facilities in the Sixth Form Centre for independent study when not in a timetabled lesson.

We have altered the timing of the school day slightly to accommodate the new arrangements:

8.45-9.05am	Tutor time
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9.05-10.05am	P.1
10.05-11.05am	P.2
11.05-11.25am	Break 1
11.25-11.30am	Movement
11.30-12.30pm	P.3
12.30-1.30pm	P.4
1.30-1.50pm	Break 2
1.50-1.55pm	Movement
1.55-2.55pm	P.5

Note: Year 9 students have a slightly shorter Period 5

Y11 and Y12/13 students arrive at school and go straight to Period 1; they have a slightly longer Period 5.

#### Other Points:

#### Arrangements for the week beginning Monday 7 September

We will have a staggered start to term so that each year group, and our new students in particular, can be welcomed into school and given time to become familiarised with the new arrangements and expectations.

Mon 7 Sept	Year 9 only
Tues 8 Sept	Years 9 and 12 only
Weds 9 Sept	Years 9 and 12 only
Thurs 10 Sept	Years 9, 10, 11 only
Fri 11 Sept	Years 9, 10, 11 only

Year 13 students have individually scheduled meetings with their tutor.

All students are in school from Monday 14 September.

- **Arrival at school on the first day:** on the first day back students should proceed to the astro-turf pitch where they will line up with their form tutor to be taken to their form room. Due to the major building works there are lots of changes to the layout of the school and some rooms have been re-labelled so students in all year groups must report initially to the astro-turf pitch to meet their tutor. There will be plenty of staff on hand to direct students to the correct place and to remind them where necessary of the name of their form tutor.
- **Attendance at school in September is mandatory.** However, there may be some young people who are advised by health professionals to continue to learn remotely or whose attendance would be contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of Coronavirus. If this applies to your child please advise the school immediately of the situation so that this can be recorded appropriately and arrangements to support your child discussed.
- **Students are expected to wear full school uniform to school.** The standard of uniform at Vandyke and our expectations in this regard are high. Students look smart and appropriately dressed for school. Full details of the uniform policy is on the website accompanied by photographs as further guidance.
- We are limiting the number of visitors coming into school during the school-day so please ensure that your children are fully prepared and do not need anything dropped off later. **Staff will not be able to loan equipment to students and stationery must not be shared.**
- Staff are more vulnerable to Coronavirus than students. Therefore the guidance is that staff teach from the front of the classroom and maintain their distance from students during lessons. This may require staff and students to change their usual learning interactions and will make individual support more difficult. However, I have no doubt that we will all adapt to this. **I know that our students are sensible young adults who will understand the rules put in place and the reasons behind them and will respect the right of everybody in school to stay safe.**
- **Break times:** Students from different year groups have separate areas for break time and alternative but separate spaces in the event of a wet break time so that mixing between year groups is minimised. Consequently **for the first week of term the café will not be open. All students should bring a packed lunch.** From Monday 14 September, students will be able to pre-order a limited range of food from the café and a free school meal will be provided by the café for students who are eligible. We hope to open the café as soon as possible to provide a hot food offer and snacks but only when we can put arrangements in place in line with the requirement for social distancing.

- **During this period students will not have access to lockers.** They should come to school each day prepared for lessons with all of the things that they need.
- **All students should ensure that they bring in their own re-usable water bottle.** We have installed additional water bottle filling stations that students can make use of in their zone.
- **In the event of a student falling ill during the school-day it is important that parents/carers are available to pick up their children immediately.** Our first aid team is equipped with appropriate PPE and students will be isolated and looked after until they can be taken home. Please ensure that we have at least two up-to-date points of contacts on the school system to enable this to be acted on rapidly if required.
- **Any large gatherings such as assemblies will be held on-line to reduce the risk of transmission.** It is unlikely that we will hold parent/carer events in the usual way for some time and that instead these will take place on-line or through separate phone or written contact but we will inform about these arrangements once the new term is underway.
- **We are very keen to provide opportunities for extra-curricular activity** as these are an important part of school-life at Vandyke. While these will not be offered in the early weeks of term, we hope to be able to start these again soon in ways that limit mixing between year groups and can operate safely.
- **Students are encouraged to arrive at school on foot or by bike or in a family car where possible.** However we understand that this is not possible for everyone. School buses are operated by the Local Authority, CBC, and some by Vandyke. They are dedicated school services. This means that students are not mixing with others outside of our school. Buses will be well ventilated and will have been thoroughly cleaned before and after use. Students will be required to wear a face covering when on the bus. In conversation with the bus companies we are suggesting that students fill up the buses from the back by pick-up points in the morning and by year group in the afternoon and that where possible students sit with the same students on each journey. My understanding is that the buses will be running to their usual schedule but CBC will be in contact with parents/carers about their bus routes and we will be in contact shortly with parents/carers using Vandyke-operated routes to provide further details. The link for CBC transport is

[https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/3/schools\\_and\\_education/530/apply\\_for\\_school\\_transport/14](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/3/schools_and_education/530/apply_for_school_transport/14)

Our expectation is that all students will follow the guidance given to ensure that we all minimise the risk of transmission of the Coronavirus and help avoid any local outbreaks. If a student was to deliberately put others at risk by not doing so then this would be a serious matter and dealt with accordingly.

I am aware that this letter contains a significant amount of information and really do appreciate your time in taking your children through this. We all want to avoid any possibility of a local lockdown and hope to return to a more normal routine as soon as possible. However, in the meantime we will continue to put student welfare and well-being at the centre of all arrangements and will do our best to continue to provide an outstanding learning experience.

There is further Government and Public Health England information and guidance on-line at <https://www.gov.uk/backtoschool>. The school's risk management plan as approved by the governing body is available on the school website under "About Us".

I would like to thank you again for your continued support. Please do not hesitate to contact school by emailing [office@vandyke.cbeds.co.uk](mailto:office@vandyke.cbeds.co.uk) if you have any questions regarding these arrangements and we will respond as quickly as possible.

We are looking forward to welcoming all of our students again in September.

Yours sincerely



Tim Carroll